

FIRE INVESTIGATION REPORT
ARSON INVESTIGATION SECTION, LAFD

107987

PAGE 1 OF 6

SFUND RECORDS CTR
107987

DATE:

NONASGD

ASGD

7-12

7-26

DATE : 880523
TIMEALRM: 0416

INCNR : 0108
NREXPS: 000

TYPEINC: 11
FIRSTON: TF001

CNCLDIST:
CENLOC : 001W

ADDR OR LOC OF FIRE: 1846 N SICHEL ST

DOING BUSINESS AS: BUILDER'S HARDWARE FINISHERS

PHONE: _____

OCCUPANT

LST NAME: DURAN

FST: JOSEPH

MI: N

SX: M

DSC: H

DOB: 05-16-48

ADDR: 3703 ABBEYWOOD WHITTIER, 90601

PHONE: 213 695 8141

OWNER

LST NAME: DURAN

FST: ELOY

MI: F

SX: M

DSC: H

DOB: 09-13-46

ADDR: 724 Aqua Fria St., Santa Fe, N.M. 87501

PHONE: 505 988 2068

INSUR. WESTERN HERITAGE INSURANCE Policy # 87CLP018705

AMT\$ 500,000

Liability Only

PROPUSE: 773 STORIES : 01 FLOORORG: A01 AREAORG: 41 MGTSTAT: 12
IGHEAT : 65 MATLFORM: 86 MATLTYPE: 24 IGFAC T : 15 CONTRIB: 420

MOBILP: _____ MAKE: _____ YEAR: _____ LICNR: _____ VIN/LIC : _____

INJURS: 000 PROPLOSS: 50,000 WATERSHD: _____ MEMBERID: TD1145
FATALS: 000 CONTLOSS: 100,000 A-UNIT: N JUV C&R: _____

MO/AKA/COMMENTS: FIRE SET IN FRONT STOREROOM OF BUSINESS - BUSINESS DOES

CAUSE: INC * METAL PLATING USING HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS

MOTIVE: N.E. *

ADULTARR: _____ *

JUVARR: _____ *

EVIDENCE : PHOTO X LAB _____ SID _____ TAPRCD _____ PROP/OTH _____
REVISDRPT: DATE _____ ADR _____ LOSS _____ CAUSE _____ MISC _____
INVSTSTAT: ACTIV X INACT _____ COMP _____

INVESTIGATORS: DERBY

JAKUBOWSKI

AIS HIT _____ NO HIT ✓

ENT AIS XX OFCP _____ SUPV APPRV _____

ENTRY DATE 7/14 CLK 4

FIRE INVESTIGATION REPORT (cont'd)

LAFD NO. **88050933**

PG. **2** OF **6**

ENT AIS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AA/AJ=ADULT/JUV ARR ASSOC. CODES: OC=OCCUPANT RC=RELEASED CONVICT	AK=AKA OW=OWNER RP= RESP. PARTY	CR=COUNSELED RELEASED OO=OW/OC SU=SUSPECT	FF=FIREFAT PA=PAROLE AGENT VI=VICTIM	FI=FIELD INTERVIEW PG=PARENT/GUARDIAN WI=WITNESS		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LAST NAME MURILLO	FIRST NAME ABEL	MI R	SX M	DESC. H	D.O.B. 11 10 54	ASSOC WI
	RES. ADDRESS 2728 Willow Pl. #C South Gate	PHONE 5636845	BUS. ADDRESS 1846 N. Sichel		PHONE		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LAST NAME RODRIGUEZ	FIRST NAME GODOFREDO	MI A	SX M	DESC. H	D.O.B. 01 07 58	ASSOC WI
	RES. ADDRESS 10507 San Miguel South Gate	PHONE 5631531	BUS. ADDRESS 1846 N. Sichel		PHONE		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MI	SX	DESC.	D.O.B.	ASSOC
	RES. ADDRESS	PHONE	BUS. ADDRESS		PHONE		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MI	SX	DESC.	D.O.B.	ASSOC
	RES. ADDRESS	PHONE	BUS. ADDRESS		PHONE		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MI	SX	DESC.	D.O.B.	ASSOC
	RES. ADDRESS	PHONE	BUS. ADDRESS		PHONE		

"C" ATTACHED NARRATIVE

SOURCE OF ACTIVITY:

On May 26, 1988, at 0800 hrs., Investigators Derby and Jakubowski were assigned to investigate a major fire that had occurred at 1846 North Sichel Street. This fire occurred on May 23rd, at approximately 0416 hours. However, due to the extremely hazardous and toxic material involved in the fire, Investigators were unable to gain access to the building until this date. At the time of this investigation, the fire scene was in the control of the Enviromental Protection Agency. Special Agent Chris Weden granted these Investigators permission to enter the subject structure and conduct a fire scene investigation.

DESCRIPTION OF PREMISES:

Arriving at the fire scene at 0900 hrs., Investigators observed a large single-story, commercial structure, doing business as "Builder's Hardware Finishers" (a metal plating company). The subject building was constructed of concrete block, with a panelized roof, and measured approximately 150 feet by 75 feet.

OBSERVATIONS:

An examination of the premises revealed that the fire originated in the front portion of the structure, where the offices and stockrooms were located. The fire communicated rapidly throughout the front portion of the structure, causing heavy charring to dividing walls and ceiling. The fire also consumed most of the wooden furniture and wood shelving that had been attached to several of the walls. The fire communicated vertically to and consumed the entire panelized roof. As the fire progressed, portions of the roof dropped to the floor below and caused smaller fires to occur throughout the rear portion of the structure.

Further examination of the front portion of the structure revealed that the heaviest amount of charring was located in the southwest corner room that was being used as a stockroom. In this area, Investigators observed nails and imprints on the concrete block walls that indicated that wooden shelves had been mounted. The fire consumed the subject shelves, along with most of the combustible material that was located in this area.

Throughout the stockroom and the adjacent spray booth area, Investigators observed several one- to five-gallon size full and empty containers. Most of the containers were found in the debris of the storeroom. An examination of several of the containers revealed that holes had been punched through the lids and sides.

OBSERVATIONS: (Continued)

Futher examination of the exterior of the premises revealed that the southwest corner of the structure was damaged by the fire. Investigators observed a large crack in the block wall that extended from the base of the wall, upward approximately six to eight feet. The exterior wall above the windows in this area were also more charred than the windows that were located near the northwest corner. These observations aided Investigators in the determination of the area of fire origin.

Investigators also conducted a thorough examination of the electrical wiring and outlets that were located throughtout the stockroom and spray booth area. Investigators observed no evidence of any arcing or slotting, and were able to eliminate the possibility of an electrically caused fire. Therefore, based on he physical evidence observed, these Investigators formed the opinion that this fire was incendiary in origin.

EVIDENCE

Investigators obtained three one-gallon size containers and two five-gallon size containers from the fire scene. The contents of the containers were found to be of a flammable liquid nature.

STATEMENTS

At the fire scene, Investigators interviewed O/1 Joseph Duran, who is one of the business owners. O/1 J. Duran stated that his family has owned the business for approximately 11 years and that after his father passed away in 1986, he and his brother Eloy have been running the business. O/1 J. Duran stated that the business hours are from 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., employs 15 workers, and does plating of all types of metals. O/1 J. Duran stated that there is no insurance on the property or its contents at the present time. O/1 J. Duran stated that he does carry liability insurance in the amount of \$500,000.00. This policy was issued by Western Heritage of Scottsdale, Arizona, and renewed on May 6, 1988. O/1 J. Duran also stated that the last time he was in the business was on Friday afternoon at 2:30 p.m. and found out about the fire when called by the Fire Department and asked to come to the fire scene as quickly as possible. O/1 J. Duran stated that while he was at the fire scene, he was told by one of his employees that a fire could have been set by someone squirting lighter fluid through the hole in the front window and then throwing a match inside the lacquer room. O/1 J. Duran stated that he could not remember who made that statement. O/1 J. Duran further stated that they use lacquer in the spray booth to coat some of the finished

STATEMENTS (Continued)

pieces, but they have been out of lacquer for about a week and have had to use sample cans. O/1 J. Duran stated that the lacquer is normally purchased in 55-gallon drums and that they normally keep three drums on hand.

Investigators interviewed O/2 Eloy Duran who is the other owner of the business. O/2 E. Duran stated that he lives in New Mexico and commutes on the weekends. O/2 E. Duran stated that to his knowledge there are only five sets of keys to the business; one each for he and his brother, one for the foreman, one for the assistant foreman, and one for the secretary. O/2 E. Duran stated that prior to Wednesday, May 18th, there had been no employee problems of any type. O/2 E. Duran stated that an employee named Gandhadviya Bhagavati told him that he was having problems with his ex-wife and that he needed copies of all of this papers and time keeping records. He also wanted all of the money that Duran owed him, which was approximately \$299 in cash and one paycheck totalling \$800. O/2 E. Duran stated that he told Bhagavati that he needed time to get everything together and Bhagavati stated that he would come back later that afternoon. O/2 E. Duran stated that when Bhagavati came back, he stated that he had changed his mind and that he only needed \$900. He then took the rest of the money, threw it on the ground, and left. O/2 E. Duran stated that Bhagavati returned on Thursday afternoon and claimed that Duran was trying to cheat him out of all the money that was owed to him. O/2 E. Duran stated that the police were called and arrived about 5:00 p.m. O/2 E. Duran stated that the police counted all the money, gave it to Bhagavati and advised him to leave the premises. O/2 E. Duran stated that he left for New Mexico on Friday afternoon and did not see Bhagavati again. O/2 E. Duran stated that he was notified by his mother on Monday morning about the fire.

Investigators interviewed W/1 Abel Murillo who is the shop foreman. W/1 Murillo stated that he had gone into the building on Sunday afternoon at about 3:00 p.m. to light the tanks. W/1 Murillo stated that there are three electrically operated dip tanks and one gas operated dip tank that must be started up early. W/1 Murillo stated that he left and then returned about 9:00 p.m. to use the bathroom. W/1 Murillo stated that he had taken his wife to see the doctor at the hospital and while she was there, he went over to the business. W/1 Murillo stated that at that time, he saw nothing that was out of the ordinary.

STATEMENTS (Continued)

Investigators interviewed W/2 Godofredo Rodriguez who is the assistant foreman. W/2 Rodriguez stated that he had locked up the business every night last week and was present during the time of the argument with Bhagavati. W/2 Rodriguez stated that he overheard Bhagavati stating: "If I'm not working for this company, no one will!" W/2 Rodriguez stated that this statement was also overheard by Raul Barajas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the physical evidence and the above statements, these Investigators formed the opinion that this fire was incendiary in origin. That the fire was caused by the igniting of a flammable liquid that was distributed throughout the storeroom area of the building.